



GRAND GUIGNOLEZ

STARMAN

NO. 68
AUG '00



ROBINSON
SNEJBJERG

dc.comics.com

From the journals
of Simon Culp...

It's bright outside
and the City...Opal
...is thrivin' with
life.

But the good of this
was that Dick Swift,
the Shade, 'as 'imself
a kip ovva daytime.
Weak, tired, sleepy
e's n'all.

Means I'm up to
write n'reflect.
Means I'm free.

Me plan...I think I
left off me journal
at that point...me
plan for the downfall
of Dickie Swift through
the destruction ov
Opal, 'is 'ome.

I've covered what
led up to that.

The feud o'hate
n'darkness we'd
fought since our
mutual creation
as beings o'shadow.

The time we fought
in England as 'itler's
bombs fell about us.
'Ow one bomb fell
dead on...

...Fusin' me form wivvin
that'o ol'Dickie...only free
to walk out in the Shade's
form on the odd times such
as this.

N'ow...walking about
I'd 'ave meself a good
old think o'ways I might
do Dickie dirt even as
I stole his long strides
as me own.

I studied. I planned.
Plotted. N'all the while
Dick Swift never knew
none o' it.

It began with me dippin'
into Dickie's own books
on Opal's history. N'sure
as sure is, one thing caught
me eye...

Grand Guignol
Septième Partie

A Villain's Tale II

ROBINSON - writer
SNEJBJERG - artist
OAKLEY - letterer
WRIGHT - colorist
JAMISON - seps
WILLIAMS - assistant ed.
TOMASI - editor
GOODWIN - guiding light

Jack Knight created
by Robinson & Harris



Swashbuckler name
o'Jon Valor. The
Black Pirate 'e
was known as.

Got 'isself 'ung for the murder
ov'is son by the folks o' Port
O'Souls...that which'd grow
t'one day become Opal City.

Difference with Valor... 'e
cursed the folks at his death
for not believin' 'im.

He claimed 'e
was innocent
...course, show
me a cove who's
gallows bound
didn't.

I SHALL WALK
THIS BURG UNTIL THE
TRUTH AND MY INNOCENCE
ARE BOTH BROUGHT TO
LIGHT. YOU SHALL SEE ME IN
THE FLICKER OF CANDLELIGHT.
YOU SHALL HEAR MY BOOTS,
AND THE CREAK OF THEIR
FOOTFALL.

AND AS YOU DIE, SO YOU
ALL WILL WALK WITH ME. THROUGH
THE STREETS AND DALES OF THIS
LAND AROUND. NONE TO KNOW
PEACE UNTIL I SHARE IT
WITH YOU.

Caught me as
funny, that...

The folks o' then...the
folks o' Opal now...
none ov'em who died
allowed to go to the
great 'ereafter.

Generation after generation
o'spirit folk all doomed to
stay stuck 'ere.

I dabble in the black arts,
me. Didn't make more'n a
moment to think 'ow I
might use ol'Valor's hate
to aid me own.



Opal grew from the Port O'Souls.
Grew and 'ad the odd feel to it for
much ov'its time.

...bit o'the Eastern city to
it...bit o' the frontier town.
Suited some. Brian Savage
to name but one.

Where it was... East n'yet
inland just enough...

Dick, when he first come...
1882...I think it was Opal's
"not sure which is whatness"
that 'e liked enough to venture
back again n'again until the
day 'e stayed for good.

1909 was the year o'the
"great expansion." The
year that Opal made its
mind up.

It was a city. A big
city gettin' bigger.

'Ad itself a look, too. A
genius'vision o'what
the cities ov'tomorrow
would be like.

Palomar St. John
was 'is name.

Forward thinkin'.

Forward buildin'.

N'madder n'a march 'are.

St. John was inspired by
n'architect o'old. **Nicholas**
'awksmoor.

'im who designed a **good**
few of the **churches** 'round
London in the time 'fore I
was even the dregs of me
ol'mum's gin glass.

Six churches to be exact...
Funny...one of 'em was
St. Annes in Limehouse
...the place'at played such
a part in me 'nd Dickie
gettin' our shadow.

'Awksmoor's designs were
in keepin' with **that** time.
"Gothic" I suppose the word
is. Baroque. Though I've
not much **use** for the word,
me.

Nothing "New Opal"
'bout it, though.

But it weren't the
'awksmoor design
of an eave or cornice
that got St. John all
'ot n'bothered.

Rumor is'at 'awksmoor was
a **pagan**...at a time when
paganism was still about
hiding on the shadows of
Christianity's pious good
stead.

'awksmoor weren't about to
design houses for a god he
didn't 'ave no desire to **shake**
the 'and of, so he **christened**
all them 'allowed 'alls in
human blood.

Made 'em 'omes of **old**
gods long 'fore the preists
and 'igh-holy fathers got
all **comfy** in the pews. N'the
sacrifices...the **churches**
...locations **linked** up
...formed on 'igh into a
pentagram.

Or so they say.

St. John **liked** the sound
o' that...liked the **practice**
n'all.

He christened the 'ole bleedin'
city in the blood o'innocents...

Five sacrifices 'e made, **different** locations
...not just churches...**formin'** the shape
ovva five-sided star.

(Seems Opal and stars are
born t'be bedfellows.)





Next bit o'interest to me was from Dickie's own journal account ov'n exploit Ted Knight 'ad in 'is youth.

Fought a bunch o'Nazis...arcane they was...quick with the spells n'exes.

Planned to send Opal to a void dimension...n'empty place o'nothin'.

Big enough to take a city, though.

The rite was almost complete when the Starman o'then n'a demon all big n'red-yellow put paid to it.

Thing I learned, though...the demon weren't nice enough. 'e took the time to undo what there was o'the rite had already been done.

N'Ted Knight was a man o'science. He didn't know enough t'know.

So there it was...a empty dimension with the door to it all set up and waiting for someone with the key.

It wasn't me opened it.

You'd think, I know, but I was smarter n'at. Like to think so at least.

I contacted a bunch of coves...cult...occult cult ...lots to be found if'n you know where to look.

The Wise Fools they called 'emselves. Even though I 'ad the Shade's body I disguised it so they wouldn't recognize me. N'I told'em I could deliver the world.

I gave'em a means to recreate me shadow.

They thought they was on the road to greatness.

Thing is...or was...I'd already alerted Dr. Fate of their antics. Who I figured...based on everything 'e knew...shadow power involved n'all... would go to the Shade.

I let my involvement be known. "Culp" that is...me real name. That got Dickie in the ring with 'is boxing gloves laced and 'is fists up 'igh.

They fought the Wise Fools. Beat'em easy.

The thing Dickie 'ad a problem with was me shadow. It wasn't 'is, you see. Each man's shadow matter is as different as 'is palm.

'e couldn't dissipate it. 'e couldn't absorb it.

So Fate opened up the void dimension...(I'd revealed its existence when I revealed me plans to Fate)...n'e consigned me shadow there.

N'there it stayed... to grow and breed and gain a strength not o' this earth.

Exactly as I planned.

Why didn't I send 'em me shadow there meself? 'Cause for me to send it there required sendin' a little of Dickie's own shadow to guide it through.

'is shadow...forced to merge n'meld with mine...would make what grew there all the stronger for its state o'turmoil.

N'so another piece of me pretty puzzle slotted in right nicely.

It was around then...
maybe a bit later...I
begun me recruitment.

First cove I picked
up was a bit ovva
surprise even for
old Culp, me who
knows surprise like
a bruvver.

Talk is as was
that Rag Doll
was "toes up"
on account a'bad
turn of luck with
some costumed
'eroes.

E'begged to
differ.

SO WHAT'S
THE DEAL?

A FAIR SPLIT OF
THE LOOT. THAT PLUS
WHATEVER EXTRA YOUR
FOLLOWERS CAN SNATCH
WILL MAKE YOU HAPPY
FOR A WHILE.

I MIGHT AGREE TO
THIS. I'M NOT SURE. I'M
USED TO LEADING, NOT
BEING A FOLLOWER.

CALL THIS A WARM-
UP FOR WHATEVER
DRAMAS YOU MIGHT
WANT TO STAGE
YOURSELF. YOU'VE BEEN
OUT OF IT A WHILE.

YES. THANKS
TO TED
KNIGHT.

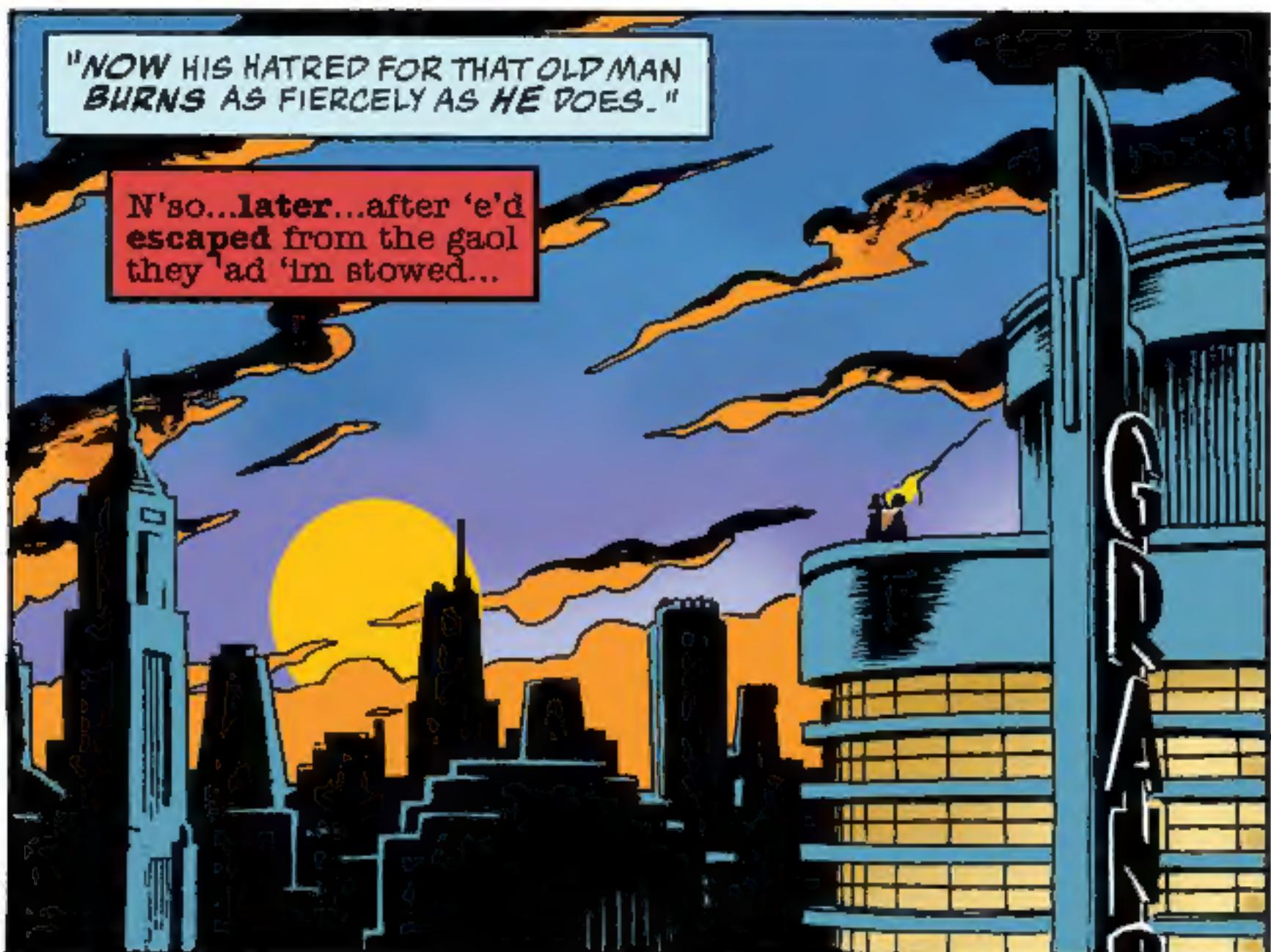
THEY THOUGHT
ME DEAD. I THINK
PERHAPS I WAS FOR A
MINUTE OR TWO. BUT I
WASN'T READY FOR
WHATEVER COMES WITH
DEATH. NOT YET.

I HID
OUT. OLD
AND SPENT.
STIFF.

YOU'D HARDLY KNOW IT
LOOKING AT YOU.

I WAS APPROACHED
BY NERON. THIS WAS BACK
WHEN NERON OFFERED VILLAINS
NEW... GREATER POWER IN
EXCHANGE FOR THEIR SERVICES.

HE OFFERED ME AN
EXTENSION OF MY SKILLS FAR
BEYOND THOSE I'D HAD EVEN
IN MY PRIME. AND BETTER YET...



Me recruitments
continued...

The Bodines.

HEY, HONEY
BUNNY! WHAT'S FOR
DINNER?

HUNTER'S PIE,
BABY, GOT ME FRESH
MUSHROOMS FOR IT.

N'MY
TASTE BUDS
ARE EAGER
AWAITING A
"HOW-DO?"
WITH 'EM.

HOW
WAS
WORK?

HAD ME A TRANSMISSION
REASSEMBLY ON A '55 BEL
AIR. TOOK ME BEST PART
OF THE DAY.

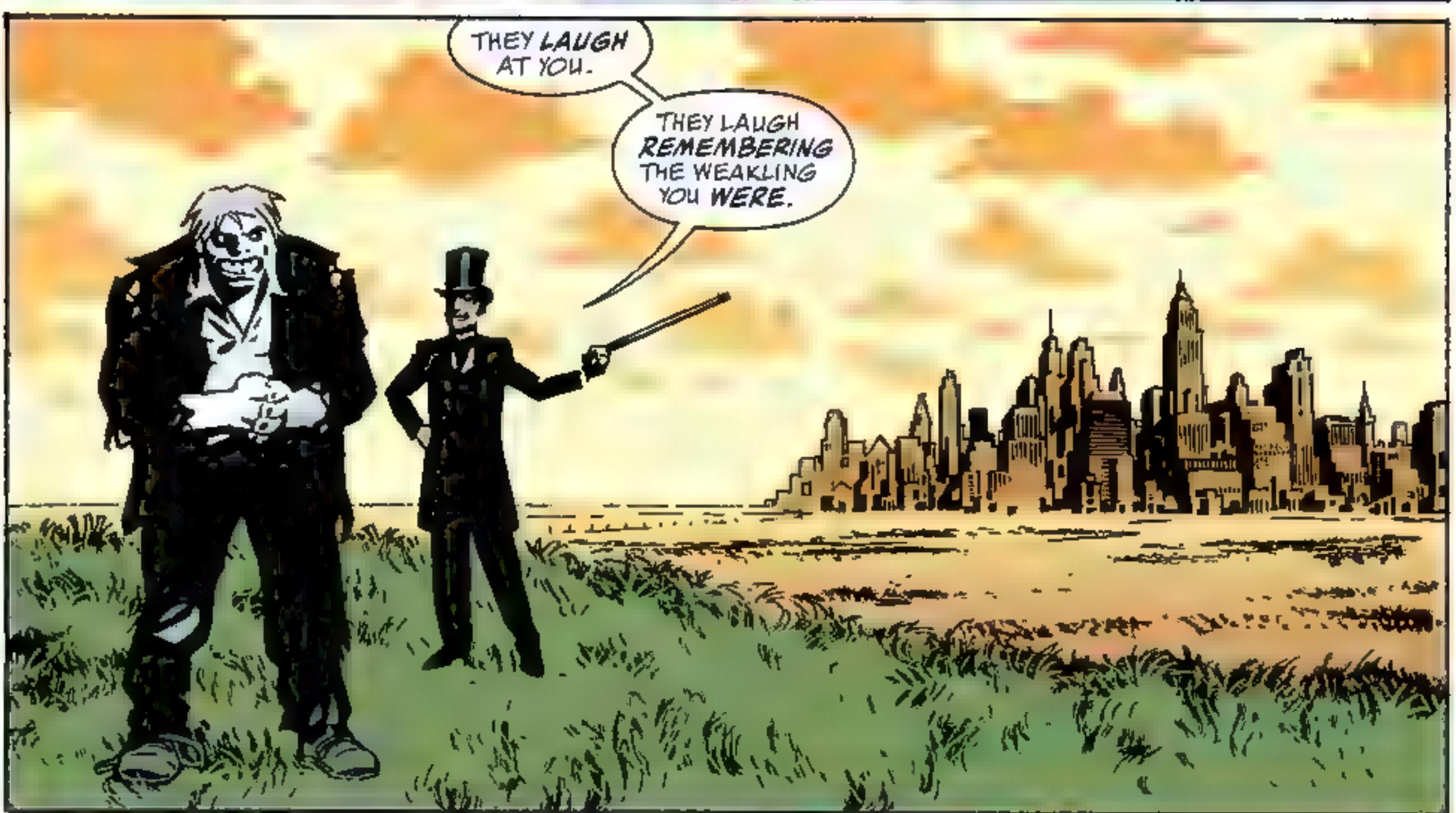
HELLO.

AREN'T
YOU BORED
WITH YOUR
LIVES?

Hi
I'm Bill

Hi
I'm Bill

Hi
I'm Bill



I 'ad learned of the **Ludlows** by then --
their family's 'atred of the Shade wot
stretched back t'the year both o'us
got created.

N'o' Tom Ludlow
Hallaway, 'im
who Dickie killed
in 1951.

The one thing not
known by many...
I'm sure not by the
Shade 'imself...

...the Spider
'ad a son.

YOU LOOK
DUBIOUS.

I AM. MY FAMILY'S ENEMY
APPROACHES ME...TELLS
ME HE'S SOMEONE ELSE...
A DWARF NAMED
CULP.

HE OFFERS ME THE CHANCE
TO HIT BACK AT THE SHADE...
AVENGE MY FATHER AND THE
LUDLOW NAME.

HOW DO I KNOW THIS ISN'T...
THAT YOU AREN'T THE SHADE
AND THIS IS SOME TRICK?

BECAUSE FROM WHAT
I KNOW OF DICKIE SWIFT...
IF I WAS REALLY HIM, YOU'D
BE AS DEAD AS YOUR
FATHER BY NOW

STILL DUBIOUS?

THE SHADE
HAS PROVEN HARD
TO KILL.

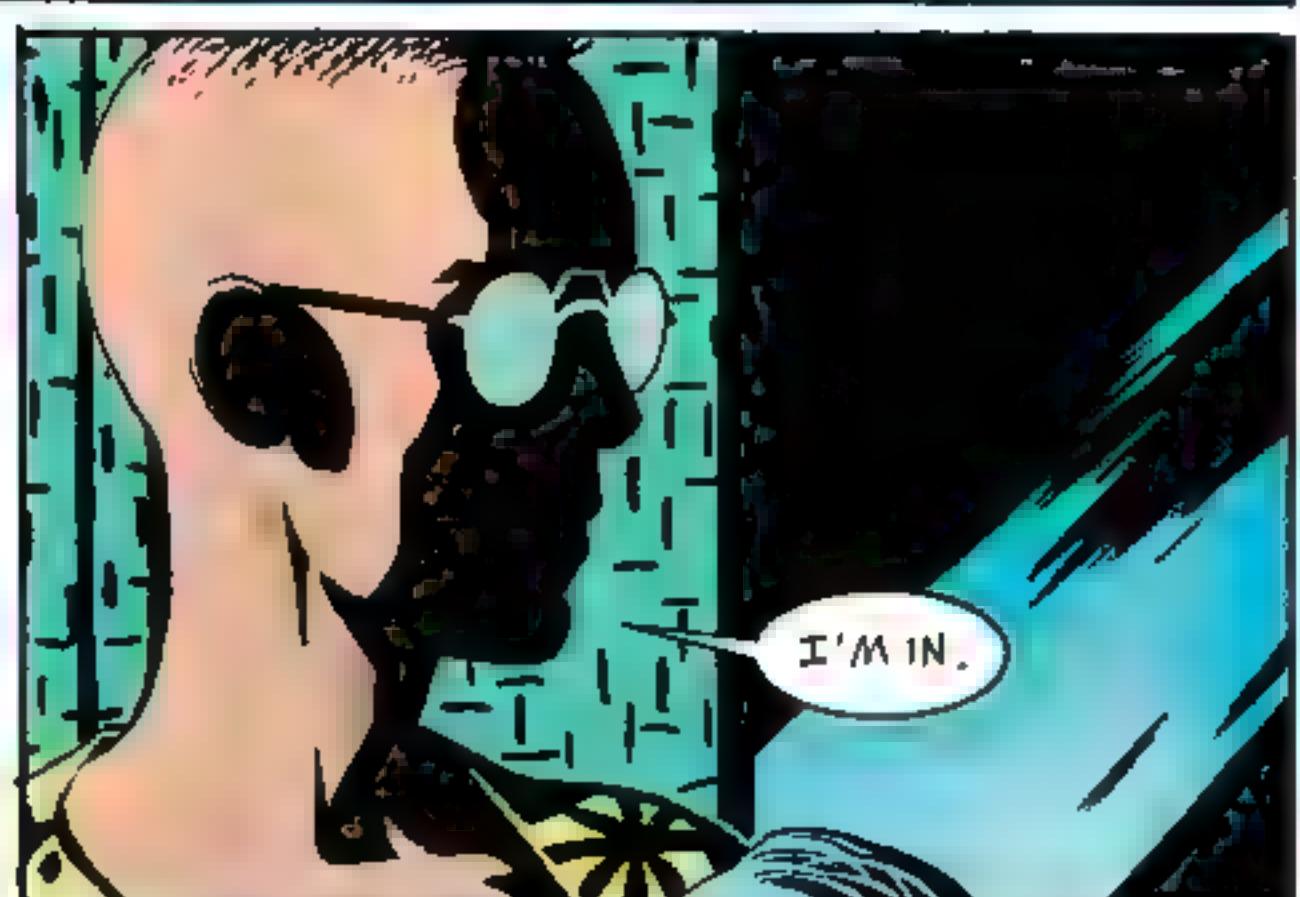
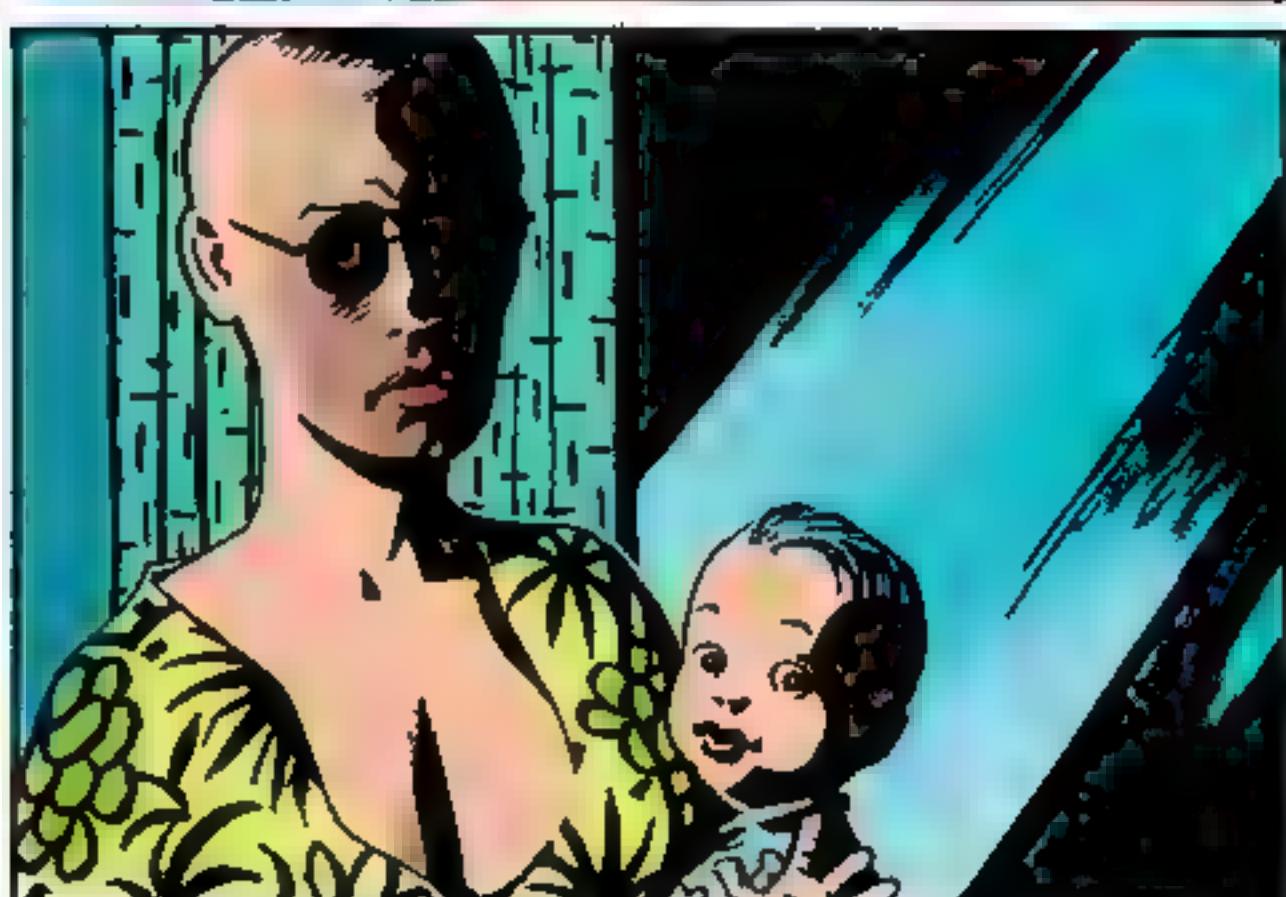
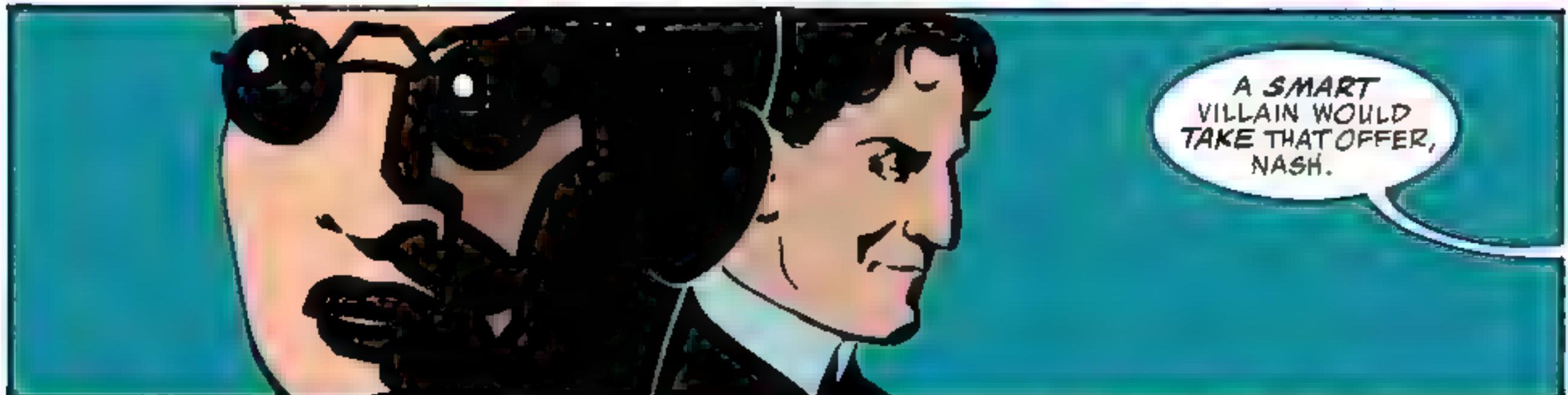
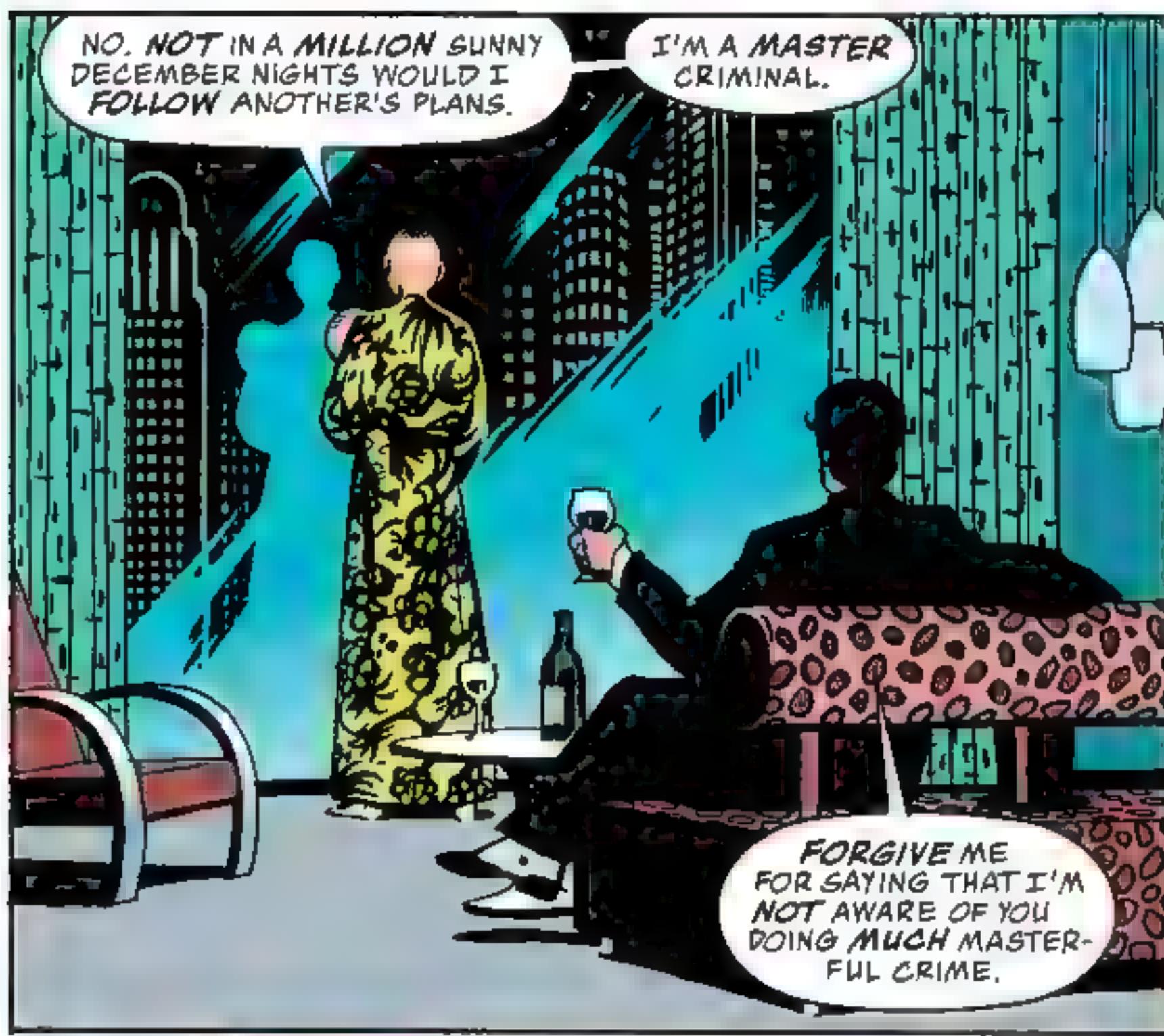
SO HAS
SIMON
CULP.

DOES THIS MEAN
YOU'RE NOT IN?

NO,
I'M
IN.

I NEED THE
PRACTICE.



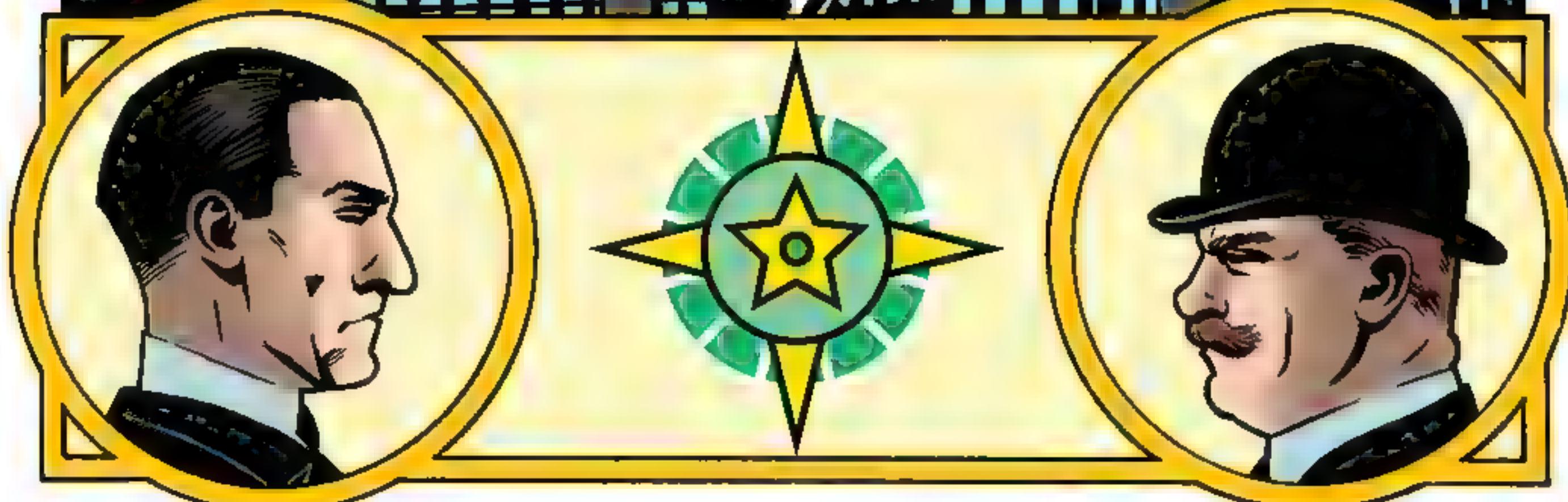






It was 'er who bade me
refresh the sites of Saint
John's sacrifices...to further
strengthen me magic...
its 'old on Opal.

...Those murders bein' the
deaths that first drew the
Shade under the Opal rozzers'
watchful gaze.



It was the winter
of '11.

The snows had yet to fall
as they did every year in Ivy
Tour, and so the city was
gripped with a raucous sense
of expectancy.

I too felt expectant, although not
for winter white or the December
holidays they bore our way.

My life was a stew, the kind you
find on the stove in the back street
ale houses. Poorly made, flavorless,
and without much meat.

I had opened my legal offices in 1908,
having finally recovered from my injuries
fighting alongside Teddy Roosevelt
in Panama. And in those three years
since had found myself lost in the law.

But not the grisly, glorious end of law's
rainbow where crime and sensation abide.

My world was one of petty
wits and divorce trials. A
sad, grimy place.

And so I entered 1911's final month
hoping for something new. Indeed,
some deep, hidden place within me
expected it.

My club, "The Groves," was an odd
mixture of members. No one sterling.
No clubman ever drew celebrity notices
in the Ivy Tour Herald.

A stuffy enclave of stale
leather and coughing.

This, like my uneventful life,
was about to change.

Donaldson Redgrave, a
land developer, suddenly became
apoplectic, writhing in his seat
without a care for his posture
and robusto, both of which were
thrown high and far.

Then, as other clubmen
and I gathered

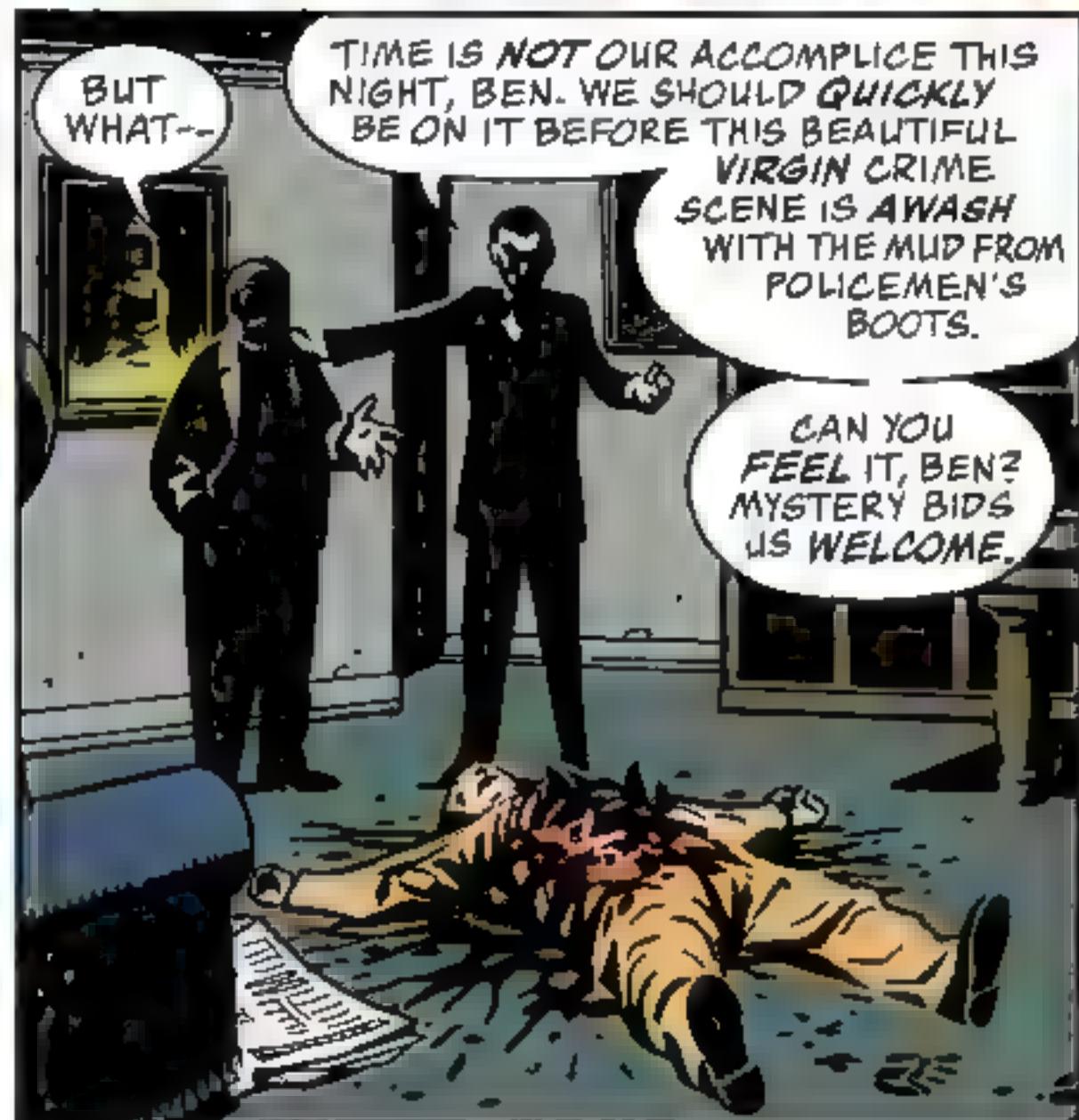
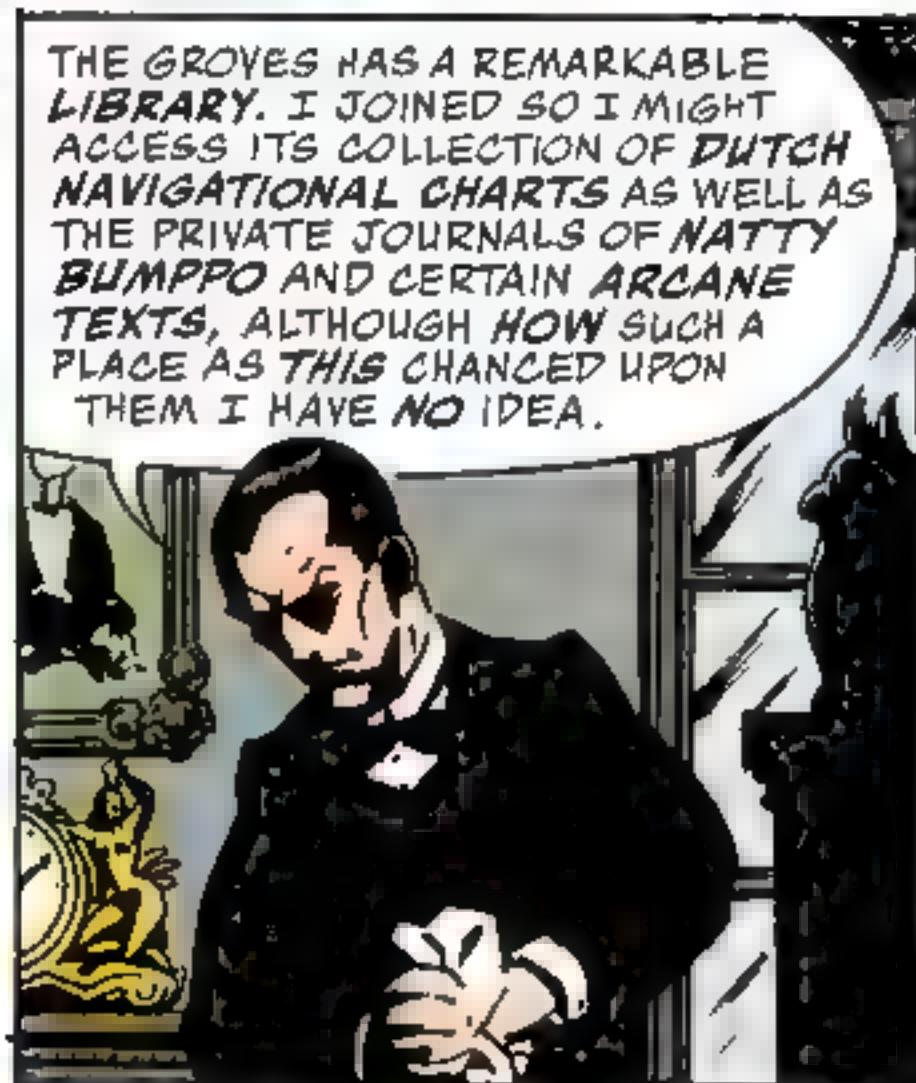
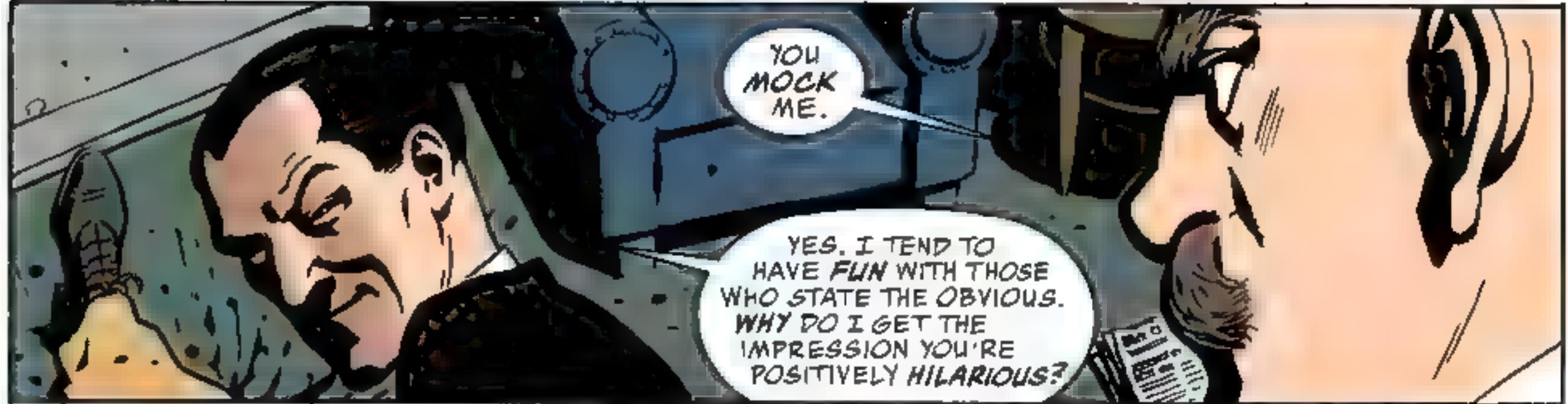
a chimpanzee burst forth from his
chest, killing him instantly.

All around were unsure what to do, whether indeed
for the club's good name the police should be called,
although most of us knew of course they must.

"What should be our
first move?" someone
asked.

"I have a suggestion," came a voice from
the far side of the room.





...an exploit I would later recall,
record and regale the readers of
"Strange Adventures Magazine"
as.

"The Exploit of the
Sinister Slayers"

There was an occult element to
this case, and although Drew
solled other such cases involving
the other-worldly, I know he prefers
crimes rooted in the earthly and
explainable.

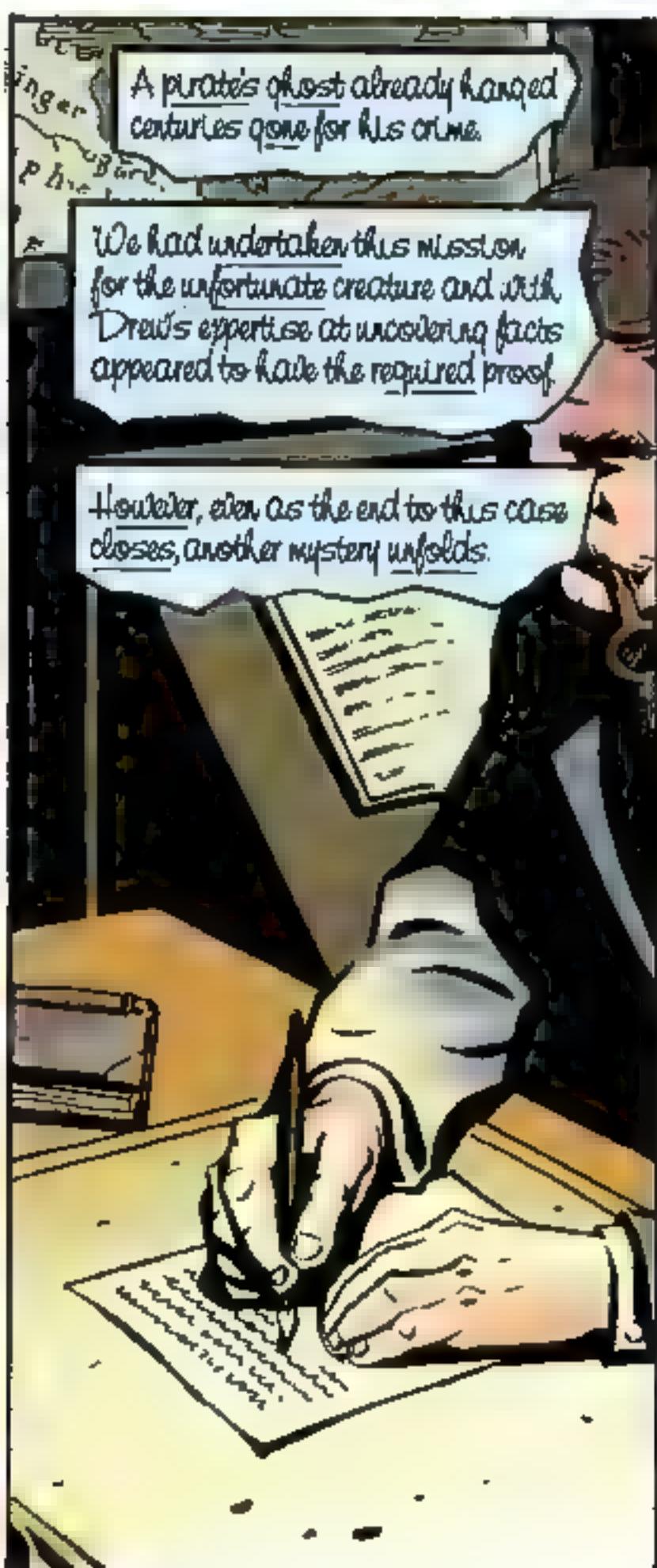
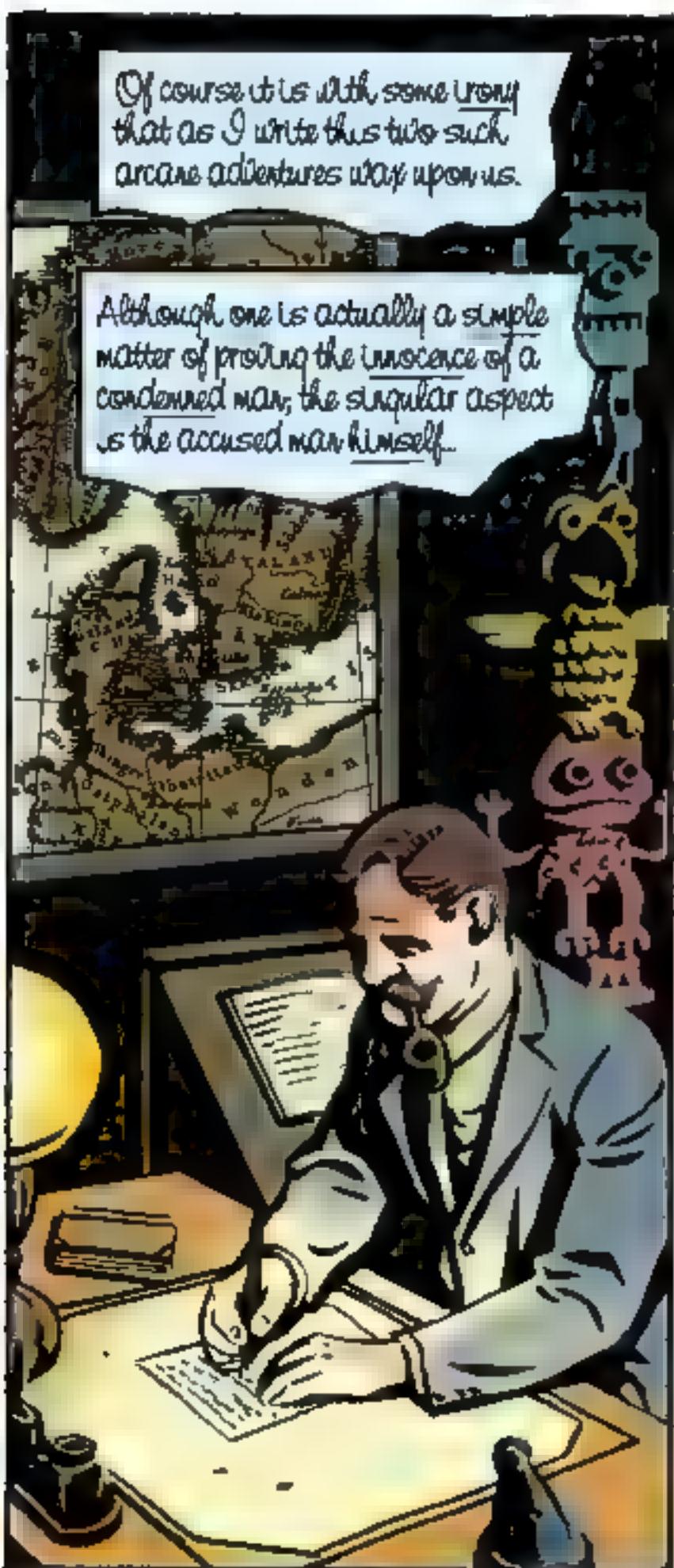
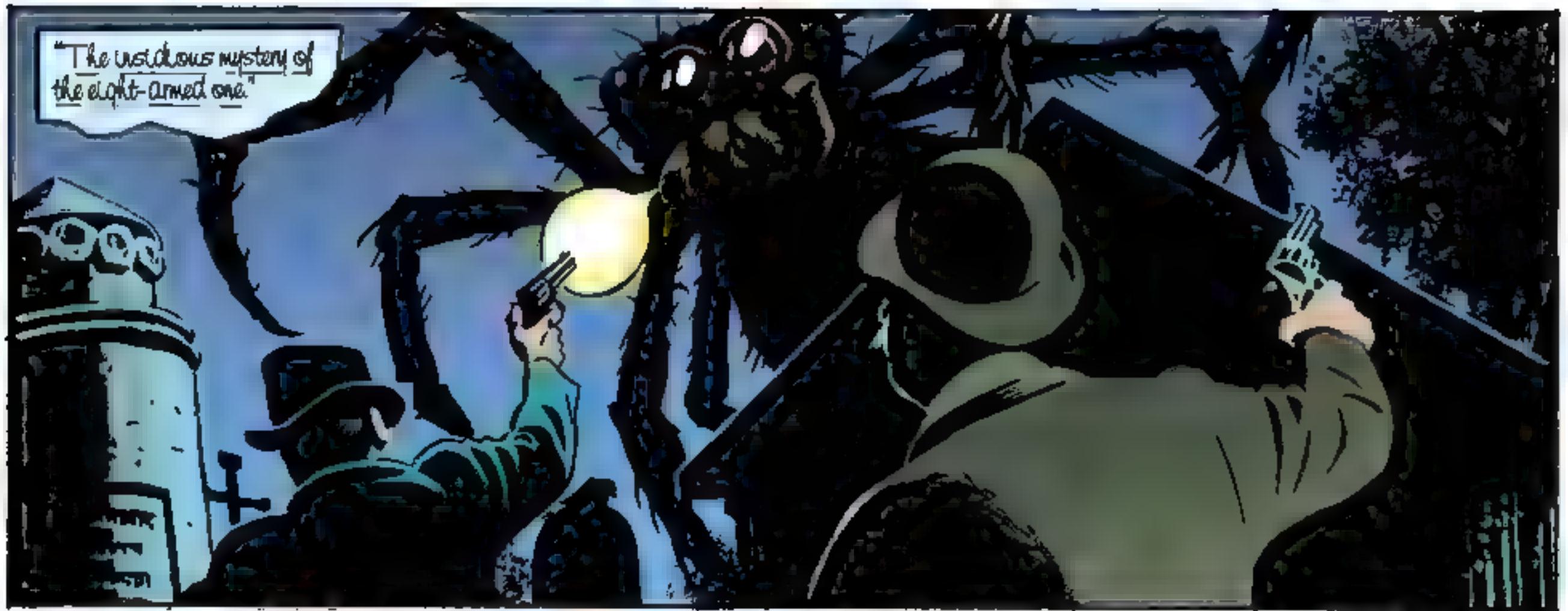
The fact that many regarded him
purely as an occult investigator
infuriated Drew, sending him into
daring maladies of the spirit;
 fury, despair, the battle with reckless
wagering to which he was always
prone.

and his music, these melodic fancies upon
his flute that were to the listener more a boon
than not compared to the other symptoms of
Drew's unhappiness.

It was unfortunate that of the
hundreds of cases I witnessed
as Drew's friend and colleague,
it was the few exceptions featuring
ghosts, demons and their ilk that
captured the public's attention.

Indeed, upon reflection, how many such
cases readily spring to mind?

"The insanity of Dr. Vane's specter"



OPAL CITY.
TODAY.

I don't recall
the time when I
was away.

It wasn't a
fiery place
I went to.
It wasn't a
charnel pit
of torment.

Apparently I went to Hell,
but I felt nothing...
nothing at all. Perhaps
that is my Hell at that.



I had had but one friend, Ben Luddy. It was with much sadness I discovered his sorry fate...A madhouse...his mind unhinged from witnessing my apparent infernal demise.



Now sadness is my ally.

My talents seem antiquated. Novel and modern in a time when Lindbergh performed miracles.

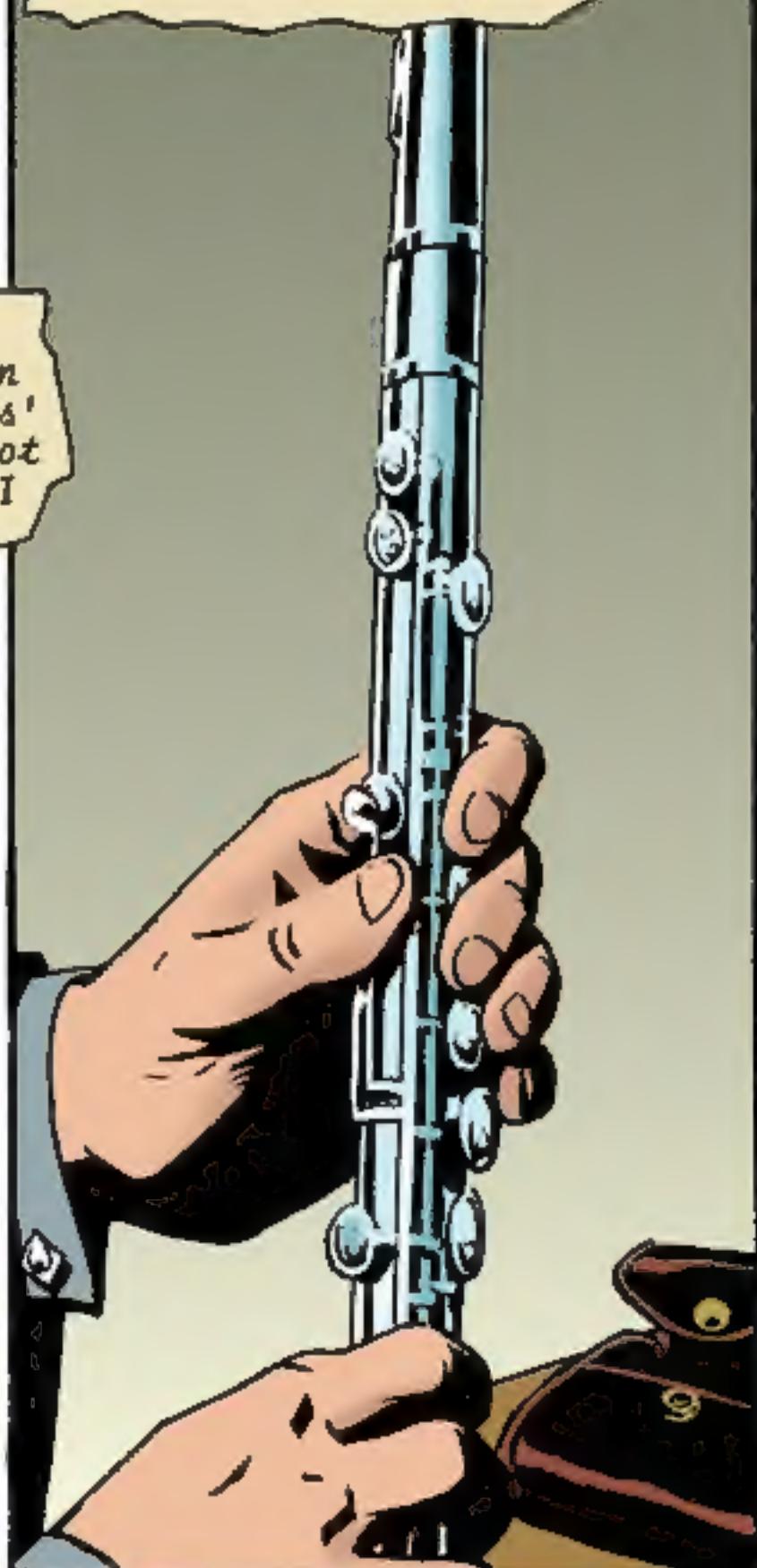
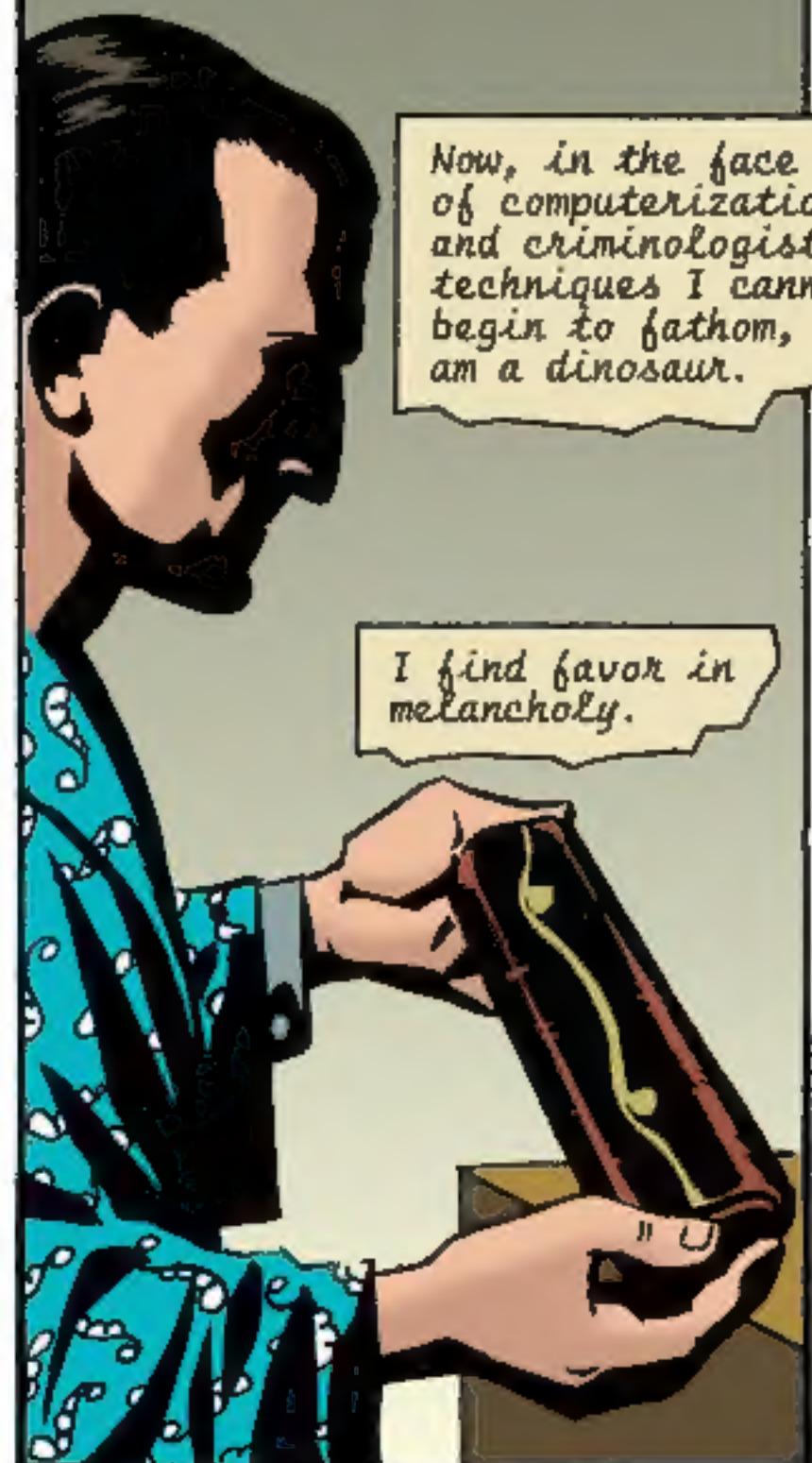
Ivy Town had changed so. Too much, and yet as much was familiar and the pain of yesterdays was agony.

Instead I settled in Opal, a place which in many ways retains the feel and look of the city I visited often.

And it seemed apt somehow to be here, where my savior...the young man with the starlight abides.

Now, in the face of computerization and criminologists' techniques I cannot begin to fathom, I am a dinosaur.

I find favor in melancholy.

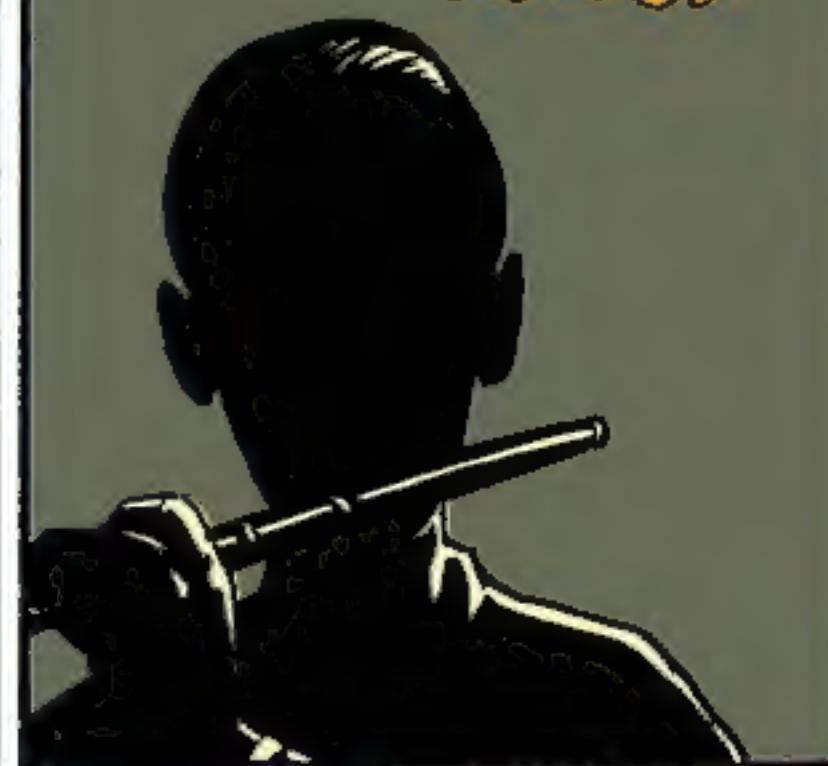


I have my books. I have my music. I have memories.

What more do I need?

What more could this second dawn of my life offer me?

KNOCK
KNOCK



And as suddenly as a monkey once burst from a man's chest...

: HELLO?

HELLO, MR.
DREW? HAMILTON
DREW?

MY NAME'S
RALPH DIBNY.
AND OPAL CITY
NEEDS YOU.

...Mystery bids me welcome once again.



Grand Guignol Neuvième Partie

The heroes regroup. The villains ransack Opal. The Spider and Shade exchange polite conversation. And Ted Knight remembers the night a woman wore the green and red of Starman recalling events from All Star Comics #15 in

**HEROES REBORN, RENEWED
...AND REMEMBERED.**



Deadman Wade

"THIS IS WHAT
AWESOME
LOOKS LIKE!"

DCP